



Arlington immigration hearings scheduled for 2023 and 2024 no longer scheduled, but backlog remains

FOX 5's Ronica Cleary reports.

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ARLINGTON, Va. - A story [first reported on FOX 5](#) found that there were a shocking number of individuals waiting for immigration hearings in Arlington Immigration Court. We found there were thousands of hearings waiting in the system, with 380 of them scheduled as far out as 2023 and 2024.

A subsequent Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request has uncovered that all of the hearings previously scheduled for 2023 and 2024 were no longer listed. Crystal Souza, the FOIA Public Liaison at the Executive Office for Immigration Review, explained in an email “the cases in the out years were brought forward.”

FOX 5 submitted follow up questions about the sudden change in scheduled cases and we asked about capacity in the courts and if FOX 5’s initial reporting had something to do with the change in scheduled hearing dates. Souza replied that the “follow up questions are outside the scope of the FOIA request.”



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Still seeking answers, we followed up with Kamal Nawash, an immigration attorney [who first alerted FOX 5](#) to the scheduling of individual immigration hearings up to eight years out. Nawash explained, “Since your story, and I don’t know if it’s coincidence or not, all of my long-term deportation hearings have been canceled. In their place, we got what is called a master hearing – but in reality, it is a preliminary hearing or what is sometimes called a status hearing.”

For clarity, a master hearing is a preliminary hearing, which is essentially a step backwards. While the system appears to be less clogged, we learned through our Freedom of Information Act request that there are actually thousands of master hearings scheduled in the system as far out as 2021. This is possibly a bigger concern than the individual hearing dates because master hearings are preliminary – meaning those involved still need to be scheduled for another individual and final hearing afterwards.

Kathryn Mattingly, assistant press secretary with the Executive Office for Immigration Review, shared the following explanation in an email about why hearing dates may be changed:

“The Executive Office for Immigration Review constantly reviews its caseload and changes hearing dates, and does so regularly, based on a variety of factors including docket availability and the availability of resources. For instance the Arlington Immigration Court recently added an immigration judge to its corps, which typically causes docket shifting at the court. Additionally, as cases change in priority status, or are administratively closed or terminated, docket time becomes available. Any of these changes may lead to rescheduling a case for a different date and time.”

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